1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

used. The pens are made out of maize stalks, the end being sharpened to a point by a razor. This point is then divided in the middle.

After the tablets have been dried in the sun the time for writing the new assignment comes. Monitors gather the boys around them and dictate to them, either from memory or from a copy of the Koran, what they should write. The monitor dictates to each of his pupils in turn, a sentence at a time, and so comes back to the first one, and this continues until the dictation is finished. Some of the beginners do actually use the tablets for writing without actually knowing how to write, although they might be able to recite the alphabet. What really happens is that the monitor manipulates the hand of his pupil on the tablet, or he may write the lines with his fingernail on the tablet, asking the young boy to trace his writing with the pen. He then asks each of the boys to read back to him what he has written. After this the monitors themselves start writing their assignment, which they should read to the Sheikh seated at his feet.

All this takes place in the morning (until about ten o'clock), after which the children are allowed an interval for breakfast. They go home for this and return after a short time to resume the second working period, which lasts until noon, and during which the boys will be reading their written assignment under the supervision of the monitors.[1] Sitting facing the walls, with their tablets in front of them, the boys will be reciting aloud their set texts and swaying their heads and bodies forwards and backwards. The babble and din of the Kuttab is the sure sign for the Sheikh that it is busy and hard-working, for immediately the din dies down, the Sheikh will incite his boys to raise their voices and get on with their work. If the boys persist in any disobedience, the Sheikh would use his stick, laying about him without exception, hitting their backs, whereupon their voices would rise and go again at full pitch. This repetition continues until noon, when the Sheikh claps his hands, letting the boys go for their lunch.

After the lunch recess the boys return to the Kuttab, each carrying a loaf of bread for the Sheikh. This has been selected by the mother as one of her best-baked loaves. Some children do not take loaves with them, but, as a result of an agreement between the Sheikh and the father, the former receives a stipulated amount of corn at the end of each harvest. The loaf, however, is a token of the teacher's work, and ideally, he who teaches the Holy Book is not expected to ask for a remuneration. In fact, the Sheikh receives in addition to the daily loaf certain gifts on various occasions, such as when the boy finishes his alphabet and begins to write the first chapter of the Koran, at the end of each section (juza) and so on. He also receives a white garment, in addition to other gifts, when the boy finishes the whole of the Koran.

The first part of the afternoon work in the Kuttab is taken up with

[1] The time in the Kuttab is not regulated by the hour, but is usually fixed either by the noisy arrival or departure of a train, or according to the shadow cast by the sun from the wall, or a boy's shadow.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

Tattooing is another form of personal decoration. It is found with both sexes among the peasants, and it may be resorted to for utilitarian as well as for decorative purposes. The operation of tattooing is a very painful one, and is performed by specialists in the art. Sometimes a woman tattoos women and girls, and a man men and boys, but there is no hard-and-fast rule about this (see Fig. 25). The street cry of the tattooer is "*Yā ṣabī ta'āla dukk!*" ("O lad, come and be tattooed!"). A woman who desires to be tattooed will, on hearing a female tattooer utter her street cry, call out, "Come here, O damsel who tattoos!"

FIG. 20. CHILD (AN ONLY SON) WEARING SPECIAL EARRING—FOR WHICH SEE INSET

The implement used in tattooing consists of seven needles fixed into a short stick, which is bound round at the end and then plastered over to keep the needles firmly in position. Sometimes smaller needles, and only five in number, are used for tattooing children. Lamp-black is the pigment employed, and this is usually mixed with oil, though some people say that water is used. However, when I last witnessed the operation of tattooing oil was mixed with the lamp-black.

A tattooer often attends the village market, where he can be seen plying his trade. Samples of the various designs, which are very numerous, are often framed and propped up against the tree

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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drew up the clay all round, thus forming a shallow bowl with thick sides.

Her share of the work was now completed, and she handed the

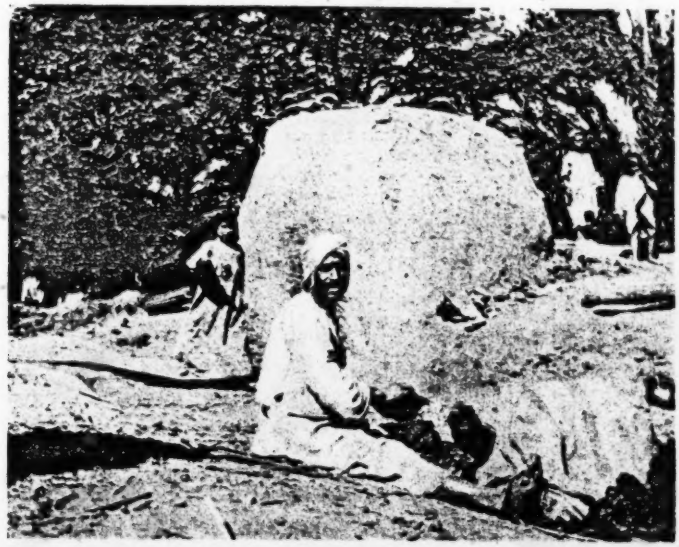

FIG. 65. MAN PREPARING AND KNEADING THE CLAY: KILN IN THE BACKGROUND

pot on to a man, who thinned the sides by drawing the superfluous clay upward. This he did by holding the palm of one hand flat against the interior surface, while he beat the exterior side with a curved piece of wood[1] held in the other hand (Figs. 66 and 67). He continued this process until he had formed a large but rimless jar.

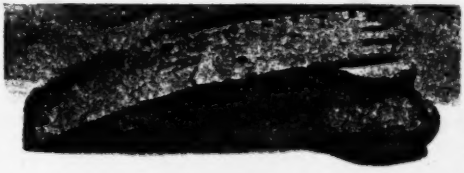

FIG. 66. TWO IMPLEMENTS USED BY POTTERS

The man now handed the jar on to another man, who placed a thick coil of clay round the opening, and, turning it on the wheel, formed it into a rim (Fig. 68). He finally added one or two small

[1] This piece of wood is a portion of the rim of an old sieve used for winnowing.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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323 handles to the vessel. The pots were then sun-baked before being placed in the kiln.

It is interesting to observe that there are three distinct stages in the manufacture of the single vessel, and to note that a man again takes his share in the hand-making process. I should mention that, owing to the skill of the potter, these jars, though almost entirely hand-made, are quite symmetrical.

The method of shaping the first part of a vessel in a carefully

[291] [413] [137]

FIG. 67. DRAWING UP THE SIDES OF A POT

prepared hollow in the ground, as described above, is common in many parts of Egypt.

323 563 As a rule the Arabs do not make pottery, but rely on the Egyptian *fellāḥīn* for the pots they may require. So far there is only one place where I have found this industry among the Arabs, and I came across it quite accidentally. I was staying in a locality in Middle Egypt where Arabs have been settled for several generations, and in one of their villages, situated close to the desert, I found an old man engaged in the manufacture of the large jars (*balālīṣ*, singular *ballāṣ*) in which women carry water to their houses. In that part of Egypt the *ballāṣ* is globular in shape. I visited the old man's 'factory' and found him hard at work. He

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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had his supply of clay, mixed with chaff, ready prepared inside a hovel, and carefully covered with sacking to prevent evaporation. A potter's wheel also stood inside. The prepared hollow was just outside the hut, and it was made there to enable me to take photographs of him at his work; he usually had one inside, where there was not sufficient light for photography. The hollow was circular and shallow, and was lined with chopped straw well beaten into

FIG. 68. FORMING THE RIM WITH THE AID OF THE WHEEL

the ground, until the surface was smooth and firm. The potter took a large piece of clay, which he formed into a cone shape by rolling it in the hollow (Fig. 69). He then took the implement made of hard baked clay and began to hollow out the cone of clay from the thick end into a thick, shallow bowl. Laying aside the clay implement, the potter now began to draw up the sides of the vessel with his left hand and the wooden implement, in the manner described above (Fig. 70). This process was continued until a large globular water-jar was formed. The somewhat small circular opening was carefully nipped into shape with the fingers and thumb, and then the jar was put in the sun to dry and harden for some hours before the rim was added on the wheel (Fig. 71). It

[Text continues on p. 145]

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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When it is ready for use each potter takes a quantity from this store, and places it in his hut, covering it, as usual, with sacking. A large lump of clay, worked up into a thick bolster shape, is taken and placed on the round table above the wheel. From this quantity of clay a number of *ḳulal* are made, each one, on completion, being cut off from the mass of clay by a string attached to a short stick (Fig. 80).

FIG. 79. TWO TYPES OF ḲULLEH OR WATER-BOTTLE

The potter begins by hollowing out the upper portion of the clay with his thumb, turning the wheel with his foot all the time, and slowly drawing up the sides of the vessel, which at the first stage resembles a bowl with thick sides. Then this is gradually shaped into a slender vessel by drawing up the sides, which, of course, become much thinner, until the *ḳulleh* is formed. The grooving

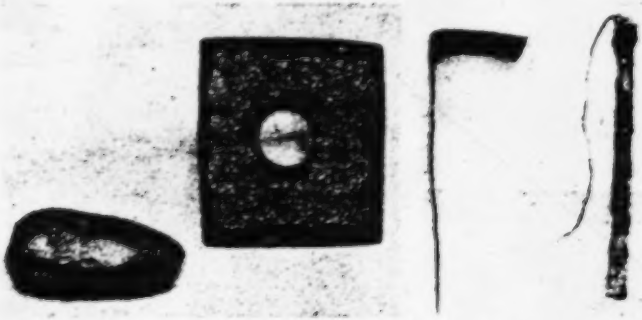

FIG. 80. POLISHING STONE, SĀDIF, GARŪT, AND STRING FOR CUTTING OFF FINISHED POTS

and final shaping is done with the aid of an implement called a *sādif*, a small, thin square of iron perforated in the centre (Fig. 80). The *sādif* is also used for incising the simple designs to be seen on the *ḳulal* made in this locality. The *ḳulleh* is then, as stated above, cut off by a string. The *ḳulal* are sun-baked for one day, then put into the oven, the fire being kept alight for four

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Women take their full share in the business of selling, and may be seen squatting on the ground, often accompanied by their male relatives, with their goods spread out before them. The market of cheese and *semn*—the latter clarified butter regularly used in cooking—is conducted solely by the women, so far as I have seen, and they bring these provisions in metal pans carried on their heads.

Large numbers of pottery water-bottles are nearly always to be

FIG. 96. A SHOEMAKER ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE MARKET

found for sale at the markets, the better ones being made at Ḳena, in Southern Egypt, and exported thence far down the Nile.

The tinsmith also does good business, making mugs (*kīzān*, singular *kūz*), primitive lamps, and other articles on the spot, using for this purpose old paraffin-oil and petrol tins.

A shoemaker is usually to be seen squatting at work in a spot on the outskirts of the market, with a number of shoes ready for sale on the ground by his side (Fig. 96). He has an iron anvil in front of him, similar to that used by the brass- and copper-smiths, described in the first chapter (p. 32). Near by may be seated sellers of musical instruments, such as the pipe (*nāi*), the *zummāreh*,[1] and the

[1] Double pipe with a drone.